

# Madinatul Uloom Al Islamiya

Madinatul Uloom Al-Islamiya Islamic College

Madinatul Uloom Al-Islamiya, Butts Lane, Stone, Kidderminster, Worcestershire DY10 4BH

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

## Information about this boarding school

The school is an independent Islamic boarding and day school for boys and young men aged 11 to 28 years. There are 219 pupils at the school. The school can accommodate 275 boarders. At the time of inspection, there were 190 pupils boarding, of whom 154 were under the age of 18.

The boarding provision for all pupils is in the school grounds, with different age ranges in each boarding house.

The head of boarding has been in post for five years.

This inspection was carried out at the same time as an inspection of the school.

### Inspection dates: 11 to 13 October 2022

**Overall experiences and progress of children and young people,** taking into account **inadequate**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **inadequate**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **inadequate**

There are serious failures, which mean that children and young people are not protected, or their welfare is not promoted or safeguarded.

**Overall judgement at last inspection:** requires improvement to be good

**Date of last inspection:** 19 October 2021

## Inspection judgements

### **Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: inadequate**

The overall progress and experiences of children are impacted by shortfalls in how leaders and managers safeguard children. As a result, the overall progress and experiences of children are inadequate.

Children talk about being happy at the school and feel supported with their development. This is not reflected in school records and so measurable progress is not clear for all children.

External professionals are generally positive about the school. For example, the school has had positive feedback from a local health professional, and the designated safeguarding lead attends relevant local network meetings. Despite this, professional relationships relating to safeguarding are ineffective. For example, the school did not gain essential safeguarding information about a child for over a week. This concern was not escalated as required. These ineffectual relationships add to children's vulnerability.

Staff know children well on the whole. Children feel that staff are there to support them. For example, staff take the time to engage children when they are homesick. They get to know them and their interests so they can help them to feel more settled. Routines and structures are also in place, which children know well. This adds to the sense of security that children feel.

Staff support children when they first arrive at the school. There is an induction for new children, which helps them to settle into boarding life. New children have older 'buddies', and boarding leaders are thoughtful about who shares rooms with who. This is to help children feel at home as quickly as possible. Staff are realistic that this takes time, but they are committed to helping children settle in.

Children are friendly and respectful with each other. Children are also respectful towards staff, and staff reciprocate and role model this to children. Staff and children are clear that their faith encourages them to live good lives, and this is a central tenet of the school's approach. The school is welcoming to visitors. Children delighted in showing inspectors their rooms and common rooms and talking to them during mealtimes. This all adds to the community feeling in boarding.

Leaders in the school have begun to refurbish the boarding houses. They have made a start, but there is a continuing journey of improvement to bring all areas up to a good standard. There are areas where there are cracks in plaster work, dents in walls, rotten woodwork, and rusty radiators. Carpets also need replacing in many areas of the boarding houses. The school has a plan to address these works. Leaders are making a significant financial commitment to improve the environment for children.

Children enjoy activities on the school site. They play football and cricket, take part in martial arts, and have access to a tuck shop so they can have treats if they want them. They also have access to stationery and other items that help their learning. In contrast, there are few activities away from the school. This limits children's opportunities to socially develop in different environments.

### **How well children and young people are helped and protected: inadequate**

Significant failures in safeguarding practice have left children at risk of harm and there is a poor safeguarding culture in the school. As a result, how well children and young people are helped and protected is inadequate.

School leaders act on direction from external safeguarding partners when allegations are made about staff. However, school leaders have not followed statutory guidance about how staff can leave their employment while they are under investigation. This leaves children outside the school at risk of significant harm.

Leaders and managers do not act as needed to safeguard children. For example, the designated safeguarding lead does not quickly gain further information when the school is alerted that there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm. As a result, leaders and managers do not have all relevant information to help them decide whether children are safe to go home. Leaders are too willing to believe children and parents without corroborating what they tell them. This lack of professional curiosity and over-optimism does not safeguard children. This also does not inspire confidence in how leaders make safeguarding decisions.

Leaders and managers do not respond effectively when there are concerns about children's mental health. They do not put in place adequate risk assessments to guide staff. It is also not evident that full information about these concerns, or protective actions, are clearly shared with staff. This includes the head of boarding. This demonstrates a lack of leadership oversight regarding children's emotional well-being. In addition, these concerns were not highlighted to inspectors when they asked about children in the school who were vulnerable. This also further emphasises the poor safeguarding culture.

Recruitment practice is variable. The single central record is accurate, and overseas staff are appropriately vetted where needed. Staff job descriptions are acceptable. In contrast, interview records are brief and poorly recorded. For example, there is no evidence that leaders and managers consider applicants' safeguarding knowledge when making appointment decisions. This is despite it being an essential part of the role and the school documents noting that this is tested at interview.

Staff in the school have clear, developed systems to manage medication. This is an area of good practice. Leaders and managers have put in place a clear, visual

reminder for staff about children and their physical and medical needs. As a result, staff know these specific needs and support them well.

Children understand about bullying and that this is unacceptable. Children learn about exploitation in school, as well as other areas of personal risk and development. Boarding staff then reiterate this work in the houses through both formal and informal discussions. As a result, children have knowledge to help them develop an awareness of how they can keep safe.

Behaviour in boarding is positive. Children are polite and respectful to each other, staff, and visitors. There are systems in place to address any poor behaviour. Children know these well and respect them.

### **The effectiveness of leaders and managers: inadequate**

Leaders and managers have failed to ensure the safeguarding of children in the school. As a result, the effectiveness of leaders and managers is inadequate.

Leaders and managers are not always aware of their weaknesses. For example, leaders indicated that when they do not have sufficient information about a child to be assured of their safety it was the responsibility of other professionals to tell them. Leaders negate their own responsibility to seek information and use escalation processes if needed to gain this essential information. This has led to poor decision-making. It also emphasises that leaders do not demonstrate the professional curiosity needed to safeguard children.

Leaders and managers have not ensured that there are clear communication systems about children's safety. For example, boarding staff at all levels do not receive information about children's mental health concerns quickly. For some children, leaders have not put in place adequate risk assessments, and guidance and records are poor. As a result, staff do not have the information they need to keep children safe.

Leaders and managers do not have adequate systems to ensure that staff on duty know if children leave the school with other staff. On one occasion, a member of staff took a group of children on a trip who did not have parental permission to do so. The other staff on duty did not appear to notice that this had happened and this was not raised as a concern until some time later. Leaders and managers could not provide any evidence that the school has learned from this incident. They also have not put in place good enough systems since this happened to know where children and adults are and safeguard them.

Staff hold leaders and managers in high regard. They feel supported by them. Staff do not have formal, recorded supervision but they feel that they have frequent informal access to leaders for advice. The lack of recorded meetings means that leaders cannot evidence how they hold staff to account for the quality of their work. The head of boarding completes annual appraisals with staff. These do not have

clear, measurable, time-scaled objectives that stretch staff to improve. As a result, leaders and managers have insufficient information to continually hold staff to account and support their progress and development.

Children and staff respect the school prefects. Leaders and managers provide basic guidelines for them to fulfil their role. However, more support would help prefects to develop in their role.

Despite the significant shortfalls, leaders and managers do want the best for children. As well as the refurbishment plan, leaders have aspirational plans for other facilities on the site. Leaders have made these plans as they want to provide children with more opportunities to grow and develop.

Staff have access to regular training and learning discussions in team meetings. Although a lot of training is online, there are also face-to-face options. Staff feel that they have enough knowledge to support children and are keen to keep developing so they can continue to do so to the best of their ability.

## **What does the boarding school need to do to improve?**

### **Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools**

The school does not meet the following national minimum standards for boarding schools:

- The school's governing body and/or proprietor monitors the effectiveness of the leadership, management and delivery of the boarding and welfare provision in the school, and takes appropriate action where necessary. (Boarding schools: national minimum standard 2.1)
- The school's leadership and management, including its governing body, where appropriate, demonstrate good skills and knowledge, appropriate to their role and undertake appropriate training as required. (Boarding schools: national minimum standard 2.2)
- The school's leadership and management fulfil their responsibilities consistently and effectively so that the standards are met. (Boarding schools: national minimum standard 2.4)
- The school's leadership and management and governance actively promote the well-being of pupils. (Boarding schools: national minimum standard 2.5)
- Good-quality sleeping accommodation is provided for boarders. It is well organised and managed with ongoing assessments of risk, which should be documented, and findings acted on to reduce risk for all boarders. Accommodation gives boarders appropriate privacy, taking into account sex, age and any special requirements. Where children share a bedroom, they are able to express a preference about whom they share with. (Boarding schools: national minimum standard 4.1)
- Good-quality living accommodation and equipment, including appropriate internet access, is provided for boarders for the purposes of organised and private study outside school hours and for social purposes. (Boarding schools: national minimum standard 4.2)
- The school should ensure that: arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State. (Boarding schools: national minimum standard 8.1)
- Staff understand and help boarders to understand what makes a healthy, nurturing relationship. Staff are trained to think curiously about and recognise the signs of children at risk of or involved in damaging relationships with others,

including teenage relationship abuse, criminal exploitation, sexual exploitation and child-on-child abuse, and take appropriate action when they have a concern.  
(Boarding schools: national minimum standard 17.3)

## **Recommendations**

- Leaders should ensure that evidence of safeguarding knowledge and information gained in interviews, as well as information to test essential criteria of job roles, should be clearly recorded in interview records.
- Leaders and staff should increase children's access and opportunities to make and sustain friendships and interests outside the school community and away from the school site.
- Leaders and managers should increase the opportunities for staff to have individual, formal and recorded meetings with managers and seniors to receive guidance about their practice to support their development.
- Leaders and managers should further develop the induction and training of prefects to support them in their role.

## **Information about this inspection**

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people using the 'Social care common inspection framework'. This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

## **Boarding school details**

**Social care unique reference number:** SC043039

**Headteacher/teacher in charge:** Abdullah Memi

**Type of school:** Boarding School

**Telephone number:** 01562 66894

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## **Inspectors**

Karol Keenan, Social Care Inspector (lead)

Louise Battersby, Social Care Inspector



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